

NEWBERG CAR CAMPING INITIATIVE



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CAMELLIA PLANNING



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Camellia Planning wishes to thank everyone who provided their time and input for this project. We especially want to thank the service providers and individuals with lived experience who serve important roles in the community and provided invaluable insight for this project.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Newberg housing market is experiencing the effects of a rapidly growing population on a relatively static housing stock. As competition for a limited supply of housing increases, low- and moderate-income households face the choice of absorbing rising housing costs or being priced out of their homes. This pressure has shown to result in increased rates of housing instability and houselessness in comparable communities across the state.¹

Concerns around housing affordability prompted the Newberg City Council to adopt a 5-Year Housing Work Program in 2020. The 5-Year Housing Work Program consists of 49 housing-related directives intended to address a variety of housing needs in the community, including the needs of the unhoused community in Newberg. One particular item included in the 5-Year Housing Work Program pertains to “car camping,” or living unsheltered in a vehicle. This item originated with faith-based organizations inquiring about using their parking lots as spaces for unhoused individuals, groups, and/or families to car camp overnight.

The City of Newberg does not currently have a legal process or program in place to address these requests, meaning car camping is technically illegal within Newberg’s city boundaries.

Newberg City Council made this item a priority for this budget year (July 2021-June 2022) by directing the Newberg Community Development Department to look into opportunities for car camping within the city. The Department responded to a request for proposal (RFP) issued by the Portland State University Toulan School of Urban Studies and Planning for planning assistance from students in the Master of Urban and Regional Planning (MURP) program. This team of graduate students (hereinafter referred to as “Camellia Planning”) were asked to:

“ create a land use process that allows organizations and others in the Newberg community to apply for car camping on their properties; where appropriate and meets the needs of those being served.”



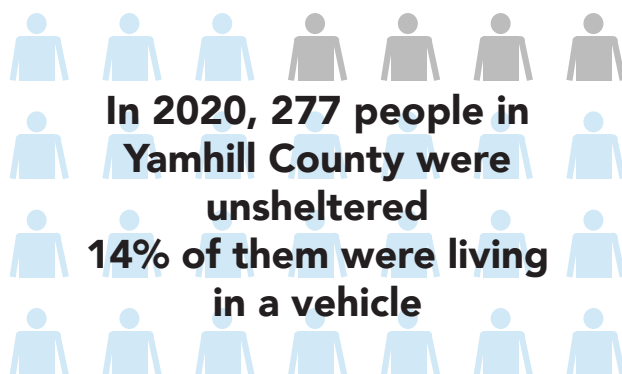
Camellia Planning developed a three-part project methodology:

- Assess existing conditions
- Conduct three distinct phases of stakeholder engagement
- Research existing car camping programs and regulations

Camellia Planning's primary goal for this project has been to provide Newberg City Council with a spectrum of implementation options as they consider allowing organizations in Newberg to host sites for unhoused individuals and families to safely park their vehicles overnight.

Assessing Current Conditions

Since 2000, housing costs have grown at a rate four times higher than income growth in Newberg.² This disparity has contributed to an increased number of cost burdened households in Newberg, with 32% of homeowners and 56% of renters paying more than 30% of their monthly income on housing expenses.³ Cost burdened households are more likely to be at risk of housing instability and homelessness.⁴



The McKinney-Vento Coordinator for the Newberg School District shared that for Newberg students, car camping is most often occasional and temporary. They anecdotally believe the number of households car camping in Newberg varies day-to-day, but are aware of Newberg families presently car camping. In the 2019-2020 school year, 239 students in grades K-12 were considered homeless and 13 students in grades K-12 were found to be unsheltered (including living in a vehicle) at some point in the school year.

Stakeholder Engagement

Camellia Planning sought to gather the thoughts, opinions, and insights of stakeholders and people with lived experience car camping across three distinct phases of engagement. Through interviews with stakeholders, Camellia Planning collected 14 unique car camping circumstances from second hand sources and two with first hand lived experiences of car camping in Newberg. Camellia Planning estimates that approximately 9 to 20 households could be car camping in Newberg. These households are likely deeply connected to Newberg through having grown up in Newberg, working in Newberg, and/or having children in the Newberg school system.

In the first phase of engagement, Camellia Planning interviewed 12 stakeholders identified in partnership with the City of Newberg staff. Each stakeholder was a representative of a local service provider or institution with experience working with houseless individuals and families in Newberg, Yamhill County, and/or the Portland metro region. In this process, Camellia planning heard that there are individuals and families car camping in Newberg,

despite the practice being less visible than in other municipalities. Stakeholders also identified the need for clarity in the program's purpose and suggested the ideal program would partner with an experienced service provider.

In the second phase of engagement, Camellia Planning sought feedback on three preliminary car camping implementation options in Newberg via a focus group and survey. For this phase 26 stakeholders were invited, including stakeholders contacted in phase one. Six stakeholders attended the focus group.

Focus group attendees reached general consensus that a successful car camping program in Newberg would preferably be managed by a service provider with the capacity to provide wrap-around services to program participants.

Additionally, a survey on additional car camping program details was sent out to the invited stakeholder list. Six responses were received.

The third phase of engagement consisted of Camellia Planning preparing outward facing documents for the City of Newberg to use in public engagement. These documents include information on the project background, car camping program details to consider, and how community members can stay engaged with the project going forward.

Research

Camellia Planning conducted research of recently active car camping programs in 14 jurisdictions in Oregon and Vancouver, Washington. This research was informed by municipal code review and engagement with the city officials or service providers responsible for the implementation and operation of their programs.

We found that every car camping program is administered and operated differently. However, every car camping program provided on-site sanitary facilities at a minimum including hand washing stations, portable restrooms, and garbage disposal as required by revised state statute 195.520.

Programs differ in the number of vehicles allowed on each site, the types and conditions of vehicles permitted, the barriers to entry for program participants, and the regulation of site placement by zoning or property owner type. Additionally, the legal framework to implement a car camping program varies among jurisdictions. The majority of programs researched are implemented through municipal code, and a few are allowed through resolution.

Ten of the identified car camping programs were found to include some form of services beyond the required basic sanitary facilities. In some instances, these services were administered by a local service provider contracted with the jurisdiction to operate the program. On top of handling user intake, case management, and additional client assistance services for program participants, some service providers also identified and

assisted potential host sites. Partnering with a service provider was generally considered by stakeholders to be instrumental to the success of a car camping program because service providers are best positioned to form relationships with program participants and support them in securing stable housing.

Options

Camellia Planning prepared three potential implementation options for a car camping program in Newberg, informed by extensive research and stakeholder engagement. It is important to note that these options are not intended to be viewed as programmatically binding, but rather as preliminary frameworks that can help to guide additional engagement with Newberg residents and the ultimate decision making process. Their purpose is to assist Newberg City Council to envision a car camping program that would best reflect the Newberg community's values and meet the needs of those being served.

Potential Car Camping Implementation Options

Option 1: Host Oversight Framework	Option 2: City Oversight Framework	Option 3: Service Provider Oversight Framework
Host Site Registration		
Registration with City of Newberg	Registration with City of Newberg	Registration with service provider
Oversight		
Program violations enforced on a complaint basis	City verifies program compliance with registration, performs annual inspection	City verifies program compliance with registration, relies on service provider to ensure compliance
	Use Metrics	
	Host sites provide an annual report to City of Newberg containing metrics from their program	Service provider provides semiannual report to city on metrics from the program as well as explanation of how program budget is spent
	Funding Options	
	Earmarked funding available to host site as grant program	City of Newberg sets aside funding to partner with service provider

Implementation Decision Guide

This Implementation Decision Guide is intended to provide the City of Newberg with an array of actionable steps that will need to be considered in conjunction with stakeholders in order to implement a car camping program in Newberg.

The guide is organized into two groups of action items pertaining to program design and administration and additional engagement with the Newberg community. Each action item includes Camellia Planning's recommendations related to that item, along with an explanation of the recommendation based on research and engagement conducted by Camellia Planning from March to May 2022. Each potential action included in this guide is important to crafting a car camping program that reflects the Newberg community's values and meets the needs of those being served. Please see main report for the full Implementation Decision Guide matrix which includes recommendations for each Action.

Design & Administration Actions

Action 1: Programmatic Framework

Determine the basic programmatic framework.

Action 2: Pilot or Ongoing

Determine whether to implement a program on a pilot basis or on an ongoing basis.

Action 3: Registration and Application

Determine whether car camping host sites must register and/or apply for approval.

Action 4: Oversight Responsibilities

Determine if car camping sites will be required to have outside oversight; if so, determine what entity will be tasked with oversight.

Action 5: Program Metrics

Determine if collecting and reporting on program metrics will be required.

Action 6: Available Locations

Determine where car camping host sites will be allowed within Newberg.

Action 7: Additional Requirements

Determine additional requirements of a program, such as facility requirements, definition of vehicle, and operational details.

Community Engagement Actions

Action 1: Engage with those who have lived experience

Assign City Staff or Service Provider to build a relationship with the car camping population of Newberg

Action 2: Engage with the broader public in Newberg

Engage with neighbors adjacent to a potential site and inform the general public about the program

Action 3: Engage with faith-based organizations in Newberg

Inform faith communities about requirements for a car camping program, and assign City Staff to cultivate interest in hosting a site

Action 4: Engage with local law enforcement

Establish a law enforcement liaison for the car camping program to increase collaboration in design, implementation, and operation

Action 5: Market a potential program

Rename the initiative, highlight the community impact of the program, and champion successful implementation

Conclusion

This report is the result of a six-month planning process conducted by Camellia Planning in conjunction with the Newberg Community Development Department. Through this process, Camellia Planning has come to the following conclusions:

- Car camping is occurring in Newberg, despite being less visible than in larger cities in Oregon.
- A car camping program is not a solution to houselessness. However, it can be an important interim step for program participants to meet basic needs and work to secure permanent housing.
- There is wide consensus amongst stakeholders that a car camping program managed by a service provider with the capacity to provide wrap-around services would yield the best results.
- The City of Newberg must articulate its own goals for a car camping program before moving forward with implementation.
- Further engagement with Newberg residents and the unhoused population is necessary in order to implement a car camping program that addresses the concerns of the Newberg community and meets the needs of those being served.
- The City of Newberg needs to continue to work towards implementing the 5-Year Housing Work Program and upcoming Housing Production Strategy to address the root causes of car camping in Newberg by encouraging more housing.

PURPOSE STATEMENT

The City of Newberg is facing a growing challenge around housing affordability. A sufficient supply of stable, affordable housing is the best way to address housing insecurity and homelessness, but car camping programs can be an interim step to attenuate harm for individuals living unsheltered in their vehicles. As the City of Newberg works to address its housing challenges by implementing its Five Year Housing Work Program and Housing Production Strategy, it is necessary to provide safe and dignified interim options for those experiencing some of the worst effects of housing scarcity and unaffordability.

The City of Newberg does not currently have a process in place to allow for car camping sites, making car camping technically illegal in Newberg. The legal precariousness of car camping subjects individuals and families living in their vehicles to a further state of instability and concern for their wellbeing. Without a legal process and accompanying programming, the City of Newberg also forfeits a potential opportunity to assist in connecting unsheltered individuals and families living out of their vehicles with supportive services or available housing options.

The purpose of this project is to identify potential options for implementing a car camping program which will serve Newberg's homeless population, and minimize the trauma and anxiety that may come from living out of a vehicle. As part of this project, Camellia Planning engaged with community stakeholders to understand who may be car camping in Newberg and what their needs are. The project also involved research into how other Oregon jurisdictions have implemented similar programs. Lessons from this work have guided recommendations for how the City of Newberg can move forward to implement a program to support the unhoused population in Newberg.

Endnotes

1 ECONorthwest. (2021). City of Newberg: Housing needs analysis. https://www.newbergoregon.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/community_development/page/29851/res3752.pdf

2 ECONorthwest. (2021). City of Newberg: Housing needs analysis. https://www.newbergoregon.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/community_development/page/29851/res3752.pdf

3 ECONorthwest. (2022). Newberg: Housing production strategy citizen advisory meeting #1. <https://www.newbergoregon.gov/planning/page/housing-production-strategy-citizen-advisory-committee-meeting-1>

4 Joint Center of Housing Studies of Harvard University. (2016). The state of the nation's housing. https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/media/imp/jchs_2016_state_of_the_nations_housing_lowres_0.pdf